

Appropriation Committee Public Hearing, March 4, 2011

Letter of support for the Nurturing Families Network and in opposition to the Governor's proposal to eliminate the community-based sites in Hartford and New Haven (page 357 under cuts to DSS)

March 2, 2011

Dear Legislators:

I am a clinical supervisor as well as a home visitor with the Nurturing Families Network and I am dedicated to serving first time parents and cannot accept what will happen to this at risk population if the proposed elimination of the Hartford and New Haven sites is approved. It is during times of economic difficulty, that child abuse rises and I strongly support preventative services and predict that reports of substantiated cases of abuse and neglect will increase, which will result in costing the state more in mandatory spending for children who will become involved with DCF due to NFN services being eliminated.

As a Human Services worker, I know the importance of programs that are evidenced-based. Home visitation is shown to reduce the rates of child abuse and neglect. Consistent research on NFN demonstrates long term benefits for the child, the family, and the community. Early intervention reduces child maltreatment, improving birth outcomes, improving school readiness, promoting family self-sufficiency and positive parenting. Many providers continue to show their ongoing support for NFN by referring to the Hartford sites. At times, many of our sites are at capacity, which shows there is a high demand in Hartford for the community based sites.

For years, I have had the pleasure of going into the homes of families from various cultural backgrounds. Home visiting provides a unique and powerful experience to these families. I truly feel blessed that the families I worked with let me into their homes so that I could see first hand not only the barriers they face in their daily lives, but also the resilience that they possess to overcome these obstacles. I am proud of the fact that many fathers have been actively participating during the home visits as well. Many attend the parenting groups, which are offered throughout the year.

The NFN program uses nationally recognized curriculum to teach child development. Home visitors also focus on forming a positive bond between parent and child. One of the questions I always ask the families I work with is, who do you have in your life to turn to as a support? Many of the families cannot respond to this question. Many of these parents are isolated. These individuals often come from backgrounds of trauma, abuse and neglect themselves and have had DCF involvement as children. Many have never had a positive role model and don't know the basics about childhood development and developmental milestones.

I can speak for the home visitors, in that many of the families have unrealistic expectations about child development and this often leads to abuse. The mission of Nurturing Families; preventing child abuse and neglect is a mission that I am able to see carried out first hand. In the years I

spent doing home visits, I cannot count the number of times I have heard a family comment on how much they have learned and benefited from our services.

I could name story after story. I feel more strongly than words can express that we would be doing a disservice to the families in Hartford and New Haven if the proposed budget is passed. NFN is a voluntary program that families are eager to engage in and at times sites throughout the state are full which again shows the high demand for this evidence based program. Realistically there is no way that only having hospital NFN sites could meet the ever demanding needs of this at risk population. Please do not take this decision lightly.

Respectfully,

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